

FROM THE VC'S DESK



After decades of evolutionary changes, universities are now facing with immense pressure to cope with the new roles and challenges especially with the influence of information and communication technology (ICT) in education and other aspects of university functions. In view of this, it is inevitable that sophisticated and advanced technologies are required in universities in order to cope with the changing dynamics in the work environment as well as the new demands by students and staff.

As far as Unimas is concerned, a design blueprint and a technical framework on ICT for the permanent campus have been finalised and the actual development work should start soon. The main features of this framework include:

- integrating ICT into all aspects of university functions as a knowledge-based organization,
- developing new and innovative applications based on ICT, and
- advancing ICT through research and development (R&D).

Some of the most common application systems to be developed for the new campus are:

- Unimas Portal
- Digital Library
- Generic Office Environment (GOE)
- E-Learning System
- Smart Card System

These application systems are to be linked and integrated with those already developed and used on the present campus, such as the Student Management System, Integrated Financial and Accounting System, Human Resource Management System and Inventory Management System.

The task of developing and implementing these systems not only rests on the shoulders of the project team but also requires the support and cooperation from all members of the campus community. With this understanding we hope that the project can be successfully completed on time in 2004.

E-Learning Unit

News and Events *September-October 2002*

Introduction

Semester breaks have always been a busy time for us at the E-Learning Unit. We try to organize as many events for our academic community on campus, and the recent 5-week break enabled us to host two major events -- a series of Online Education workshops and an E-Learning Seminar.

To make things more systematic, transparent and manageable, we collaborated with the Training Unit (from the Human Resource Dept) to organise a series of workshop with academics staff from FSTS and FSGK, to introduce them to the fundamentals of online education. Our goal was simple: we wanted everyone to have the same footing in using web-based technology, to enhance the scope of their courses and expand the perspectives of the course content, by way of creating online learning environments. By way of collaborating with the Training Unit, all training records are noted and kept for each individual academic staff who undergoes any type of training with us at the unit. The progress and contribution made by each academic staff are now monitored systematically, for the purpose of yearly appraisals and personal file updates.

Some of our workshop activities include:

- an orientation into E-Learning, in the context of higher education, in the 21st century and the current digital economy
- an instructional analysis session, in which concepts about good teaching-learning are re-visited
- an introduction to the E-Learning system currently being used on campus

The workshop sessions for The Faculty of Applied & Creative Arts on 9 & 10 October 2002, at Seminar Room 21 & E-Learning Computer Lab. The sessions with the Faculty of Resource Science & Technology were hosted on 10 - 12 October 2002, at the Multimedia Theatre & CAIS Computer Lab.

Overall, the workshop sessions enable the academicians from the faculties to reflect and re-analyse the courses that they teach at their faculties. Putting parts of their learning materials and activities on to the web also creates an opportunity for their colleagues to tap into windows to collaborate closely with peers in similar fields of expertise. It is also hoped that this effort will continue to increase the quality of teaching in general, and the academics will increase their individual proficiencies in ICT.

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After the workshop, the lecturers from both faculties have created seventy new online courses, or 70 new online learning environments, and this adds to a total of 209 online courses hosted on our E-Learning servers to date.

Later in the month of October, and also by collaborating with The Training Unit (HRM), we organised a two-day Seminar on Online Education, as part of its strategic plans to train its academics to integrate the potentials of E-Learning in its university curriculum. 100 lecturers were invited to attend the seminar, conducted on October 15th and 16th, including all faculty deans at the university. Two E-Learning specialists in the region, Dr. Albert Dean Atkinson and Dr. Jeff Tang Kin Seng, conducted the seminar.

Activities

On Day One, Dr. Albert Dean Atkinson, an E-Learning specialist at the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) in Los Baños, the Philippines, presented and shared ideas and experiences in converting legacy content for online courses. His session provided an insight into the fundamental planning phases and processes involved converting existing materials into web-friendly instructional materials. Dr. Atkinson has extensive experience in dealing with technology-based courses. Prior to the current IRRI assignment, Dr. Atkinson worked as a project leader for Electronic Data Systems (EDS) in Dallas, Texas USA. There, he participated in and led teams that created custom built and DigitalThink™ based e-Learning courses for EDS' global audience of more than 140,000 employees. He has spent 10 years living and working in South and Southeast Asia. He holds a Bachelor of Science degree from Texas A&M University in Agricultural Education and a masters and doctoral degree from the University of Minnesota in Education Administration.



Dr. Albert Dean Atkinson was explaining the fundamental of Converting Legacy Materials for Online Courses.

His session, titled "Converting Legacy Materials for Online Courses", provided an insight into the fundamental planning phases and processes involved converting existing materials into web-friendly instructional materials. Lively and interactive, Dr. Atkinson's sessions were punctuated with group dynamics and metaphors to easily convey ideas and facts to the participants.

In speaking about "Converting Legacy Materials for Online Courses", Dr. Atkinson touched on three aspects, namely:

1. Learning Material and its Transition from Atoms to Bits,
2. The 3P's of eLearning: Promise, Paranoia, and Potential
3. Applied E-Learning Architecture (applying converted legacy content to an E-Learning environment).

In illustrating the ease of converting material to a web-friendly format, Dr. Atkinson conducted a live demo, in which he prepared a course webpage complete with audio-visual aids and interactive activities for the participants.

On Day Two, the participants met Dr. Jeff Tang Kin Seng, an E-Learning consultant from Singapore. His session centred around issues in coaching effectively online. It was an eye-opening experience for the academics, as they looked at many different aspects of online mentoring, particularly in the deployment and assessment aspects of online coaching.

His session titled "What eLearning Practitioners need to know", centered around issues in coaching effectively online. Dr. Tang, drawing from his experiences, spoke on the realities of online mentoring through stories of examples and real life situations. His talk centered on three aspects of online coaching, namely:



Participants from FSTS were indulged in the online learning workshop session.

1. Developing an Online Learning Community- How?
2. Ensuring Instructional Effectiveness and What the Technology can do
3. Online Coaching: Is it for me?

Dr. Tang is a graduate from James Cook University (BSc in Marine Biology), and went on to marine research at NUS. Dr Tang was involved in setting up "Underwater World" in Singapore, before taking up his Masters at University of Wales. He then worked on environmental impact assessment before moving more into the IT field, especially in the area of E-Learning and Knowledge management. This was when he joined ICUS (Singapore), and he was heavily involved in developing and implementing online learning solutions for various corporate clients, including online coaching. Today he still works as a consultant in E-Learning, while also carrying out face-to-face training and lecturing.

The seminar illustrated a range of innovative possibilities for the UNIMAS academics who wish to adopt E-Learning as a tool for teaching-learning at the university. All in all, the seminar helped demystify the myth that technology would take over the roles of subject-matter experts. The message was clear: Technology is just a tool, and the value of E-Learning fundamentally remains with subject-matter experts, who decide on the design, structure and level of complexity of the learning process.

CAIS UPDATES

Electronic Resources more to come !

What's New On Line for You?

Taylor and Francis Ltd.

Issues in Mental Health Nursing
Acta Paediatrica

Carfax Publishing

Australian Journal of International Affairs
Contemporary Politics
Journal of Human Development

You can view our online subscriptions at:

<http://www.catchword.com/subscriptions.htm>

Genetics Society of America

Genetics Online

<http://www.genetics.org/subscriptions/>

For an up-to-date listing of what's available, check E-Journals in` CAIS Homepage

http://www.unimas.my/en/cais/cais_index.html

Online Databases....UPDATES !!!!

ENGINEERING INFORMATION (Ei Village)

A new version of Engineering Village 2 provides a wide range of new improvements, features and functions designed to speed the research process and enhance research results, including:

- Considerable improvement in response time
- Combined searching of Compendex® and INSPEC® with deduplication of records (INSPEC requires an additional subscription; contact your Ei Account Manager for more details)
- Ability to limit your searches by Treatment type in Quick Search interface
- Option to turn autostemming on/off when you use Quick Search
- Significant enhancements in page design

The current version of the Village is accessible at the same URL <http://www.ei.org/ev2/home>. The beta version of the new release may be found at www.engineeringvillage2.org. Both versions of EV2 are scheduled live for approximately 7 weeks, till the end of 2002. On or about January 1, 2003, the older version of EV2 will be shut down and access will be redirected to the new URL.

PREMIER EBSCOHOST BUSINESS SOURCE

This database provides full text business information via User ID & Password through the following URL:

<http://search.global.epnet.com>

For User-ID & Password please get from Korina /Nurul at ext 163/277

Southeast Asia Collection Updates

More books, serials and articles have been received from the major contributor Professor Marvin Rogers, an American Political Scientist. To date the collection has expanded to more than 5000 volumes of books and serials as well as 1450 articles some of which dated as far back as 1893. Users can check all these materials via our Online Public Access Catalog (EasyPAC).

Unimas Collection

With the setting up of the University's Publication Unit and the growing number of books and serials being published, CAIS felt it most appropriate to build up the Unimas Collection. The Collection includes all types of publications by Unimas such as books, serials, reports, reprints and brochures.

CICTS UPDATES

The Information Technology (IT) Network and System Infrastructure for The Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences Complex, at Lot 77, Section 22, KTLD.

Lotus was fully implemented in Unimas in the year 2001. Since then, Lotus E-Mail and Leave Application System were introduced. In March 2002, CICTS teamed up with Professional Computer Systems Sdn. Bhd. to develop the IT Helpdesk System. The objectives of the system are:



The Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences Complex, at Lot 77, Section 22, KTLD or better known as Lot 77 is located in Kuching, about 30km away from UNIMAS.

The IT network and system infrastructure project in Lot 77 provides network connectivity for both the Admin Block and Student's hostel by taking advantage of the state-of-the-art technologies.

As a sub-network of UNIMAS, Lot 77 is connected to UNIMAS via a 2-Mbps leased-line.

The network infrastructure rides on Gigabit Ethernet (GE) switched-technology with 100 Mbps to the users.

Basically, the project has seen to the implementation of the followings:

- Local Area Network (LAN) Infrastructure
- Cisco IP Telephony System
- Cisco Wireless System
- Network Management System
- Structured Cabling System

The Cisco-based LAN was implemented with a Fault-Tolerant Design complete with Virtual LAN (VLAN) properties for better control and manageability. The Network Management System administratively complements the LAN.

Lot 77 is further highlighted with the implementation of Cisco IP Telephony systems and Wireless network. These features allow flexibility in means of connectivity for the users besides exposing users to the state-of-the-art technologies.

In addition, the structured cabling system is based on the certified Krone Cat5E Truenet solution for the horizontal cabling. The backbone cabling on the other hand, uses Multimode Indoor fibre optic, vertically, and Single-mode Outdoor fibre optic for inter-building, between the Admin and Hostel.

Thus, the completion of this project has virtually located Lot 77 within UNIMAS.

NETWORKED MULTIMEDIA EDUCATION SYSTEM (NMES)

The Networked Multimedia E-learning System (NMES) is a nation-wide satellite-based project sponsored by the JAPAN INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AGENCY (JICA). This project is aimed at training a large numbers of Knowledge workers in the fields of engineering, IT and multimedia within and outside of Malaysia. The local recipient of this project is Ministry of Energy, Communication & Multimedia (KTKM) and Multimedia University (MMU), Cyber Jaya.

Multimedia University will be the main hub for this project, having facilities for transmitting multimedia e-learning contents to five other remote site which includes Unimas, Telekom Training Centre, Sabah; Penang Skills Development Centre, Penang; Industrial Training Institute, Kuantan and Universiti Telekom, Melaka. The project will be carried out for a duration of 4-years between 2002-2005. Central site and remote sites are connected via MEASAT-II C-band satellite communications service providing a 2 Mbps Incoming Channel and 128 Kbps Outgoing Channels.

The equipment received by Unimas for this project consists of 30 units of desktop personal computers, 1 server supporting Video-on Demand capabilities, 1 spoofing machine for security, 1 note book, 4 units of flat screen television, AV system for recording and projection as well as the satellite-based communication system.

Lectures can be broadcasted to the remote sites from MMU through the use of the MEASAT satellite. The lectures are then projected on the TV screen at the remote site on real time. Student also can access the broadcast from their PC together with lecture notes made available on parallel session. This equipments provides 'video on demand' services whereby all lectures are recorded on servers and users can access the lectures they missed anytime using their PC.

The installation was commissioned with the help of engineers from NTT corporation on 17 June 2002 after the equipment was received from Japan. On the 10 of October 2002, YB Datuk Amar Leo Moggie, Minister of Energy, Communications and Multimedia, officially launched the project from MMU, Cyberjaya.

Currently, the system has been used for conducting meetings with video-conferencing abilities to coordinate the launching of the NMES project with MMU staff. We are currently running two pilot courses whereby we are experimenting with team-teaching and elective courses for FIT students.

The system can now be used by all Faculties/Centres/ Institutes in Unimas for tele-learning classes which reduces the need for flying lecturers. This system can also be used for video-conferencing and also tele-training. MMU is charging RM233 per hour, for the usage of the system which covers the satellite link charges as well as payment for their technicians.

The types of teaching-learning that can be conducted by using the NMES include:

- Video Conference session for a small class or a debate-type lecture
- Interactive session with text based response for a large class
- A combination of the above two for a middle-size class
- One-way lecture with high quality picture and voice response for a large class

The system will also facilitate R&D between the institutions involved. R&D activities will include: Studies to evaluate the effectiveness of Satellite-based E-learning systems Explore the possibilities on Satellite-based e-learning courses dispatched from remote sites.

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Video conference session during the Launching of the system